

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1537

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 9939

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, PINS, PINT, NI

SUBJ: TWO COMMITTEES NAMED; AWOLOWO SAYS COUNT ME OUT.

REF : (A) LAGOS 9682 (B) IBADAN 0451

BEGIN SUMMARY: WITH CHARACTERISTIC DESPATCH FMG HAS APPOINTED TWO OF THREE BODIES PROMISED IN HEAD OF STATE MUHAMMED'S OCTOBER 1 SPEECH (REFTEL A). THEY ARE 13-MAN PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMISSION AND 50-MAN COMMITTEE TO DRAFT NEW CONSTITUTION. CORRUPT PRACTICES INVESTIGATION BUREAU, ALSO PROMISED IN SPEECH, IS YET TO BE NAMED. WHILE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION'S WRIT IS RATHER LIMITED, CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE COULD PROVE HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT, FIRST MILESTONE ON ROAD TO CIVILIAN RULE, PASSED BY MUHAMMED'S FMG EXACTLY ON SCHEDULE. IT WOULD ALSO SEEM TO OFFER MEMBERS SPRINGBOARD TO LEADERSHIP OF FUTURE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. QUICK GLANCE AT MEMBERSHIP REVEALS NUMEROUS ECONOMIC NATIONALISTS WHO MAY TRY TO TAKE CONSTITUTION DRAFTING PROCESS IN DIRECTIONS FMG DOES NOT WANT TO GO. COMMITTEE IS ALREADY IN MIDST OF CONTROVERSY: CHIEF AWOLOWO, ONE OF LEADING APPOINTEES, HAS PUBLICLY STATED HIS REFUSAL TO SERVE. END SUMMARY.

1. NEW PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMISSION, APPOINTED OCTOBER 3,
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IS EMPOWERED INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS BY PUBLIC AGAINST PUBLIC

OFFICERS AND FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES. IT CANNOT, HOWEVER, INVESTIGATE WRONGDOING COMMITTED PRIOR TO JULY 29, 1975, NOR CAN IT TACKLE ANY MATTER PENDING BEFORE SMC, FEC, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATES OR A COURT OF LAW. BODY CONSISTS OF CHIEF COMMISSIONER, ALHAJI YUSUFU MAITAMA SULE, AND TWELVE OTHER COMMISSIONERS, ALL RELATIVE UNKNOWNNS, WHO WILL BE POSTED TO OFFICES IN EACH OF THE STATE CAPITALS.

2. CONSTITUTION DRAFTING COMMITTEE HAS BEEN DRAWN FROM THE BAR, UNIVERSITIES, PRIVATE SECTOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT. IT INCLUDES TWO MEMBERS FROM EACH OF TWELVE STATES. MANY OLD POLITICIANS ARE PROMINENT IN ITS RANKS. CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE IS CHIEF F. ROTIMI A. WILLIAMS, ONE OF NIGERIA'S LEADING LEGAL PRACTITIONERS, A MAN OF REMARKABLE INTELLECT AND CAPACITY FOR HARD WORK. OTHER NOTEWORTHY MEMBERS ARE OLD IBO POLITICIAN DR. KINGSLEY O. MBADIWE, WEALTHY FORMER BIAFRAN EMISSARY ENGAGED IN NUMEROUS BUSINESS ACTIVITIES, AND DR. PIUS OKIGBO, BRILLIANT IBO ECONOMIST AND ONE-TIME ARCH-SUPPORTER OF OJUKWU AND BIAFRAN REBELLION. COMMITTEE IS LOADED WITH OLD SOCIALIST WARHORSES: BOLA IGE OF THE OLD ACTION GROUP (AG); SAM G. IKOKO, AG'S LEADING IBO AND A WELL-KNOWN MARXIST; ALHAJI AMINU KANO; ALHAJI FEMI OKUNNU AND DR. OBI WALI. OTHERS, LESS WELL-KNOWN, WHO ARE ADVOCATES ECONOMIC NATIONALISM INCLUDE KANMI ISHOLA-OSOBU (LAGOS PLBRL, 1975) A LAGOS LAWYER; DR. OYE OYEDIRAN, A DOCTOR OF TROPICAL MEDICINE AND ONE OF UNIBADAN'S NEW NATIONALISTS; PAUL I. UNONGO, WHO WROTE "SAY IT LOUD WE'RE BLACK AND STRONG" (1970); AND DR. YUSUF BALA USMAN OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, STRONG ANGLOPHOBE ECONOMIC NATIONALIST. THIS GROUP MAY BE TEMPTED USE CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING EXERCISE AS SOUNDING BOARD FOR THEIR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL THEORIES, PERHAPS WORK SOME STIPULATIONS REGARDING ECONOMIC SYSTEM INTO DRAFT CONSITUTION. QUESTION ARISES HOW MUCH OF THIS FMG WILL TOLERATE.

3. AS INDICATION SOME NIGERIANS HAVE ALSO NOTED COMMITTEE'S POSSIBLE IDEOLOGICAL BENT, ON OCTOBER 8, BRIGADIER DANJUMA, CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF AND MEMBER RULING SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL, ASSURED A PRESS CONFERENCE IN IBADAN THAT NIGERIA WOULD TREAD A MIDDLE ROAD AND WILL "...NEITHER BECOME A CAPITALIST NOR
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A COMMUNIST STATE." HE SAID NIGERIA HAD MIXED ECONOMY AND WOULD CONTINUE DOWN THAT PATH.

4. CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLowo, PERHAPS BEST-KNOWN OF ALL THE OLD POLITICIANS APPOINTED TO CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE, ISSUED SOMEWHAT PUZZLING STATEMENT OCTOBER 6 THAT HE DECLINES TO SERVE. HE GAVE FOLLOWING REASONS: (1) HIS LACK OF TRAINING IN LEGAL DRAFTSMANSHIP; (2) HIS VIEW THAT DRAFTING SHOULD

BE PRECEDED BY "FORMATION OF BASIC PRINCIPLES" WHICH WOULD GUIDE EXPERT DRAFTSMEN; PRESENT COMMITTEE, WITH EXCEPTION OF ROTIMI WILLIAMS, WHO IS EXPERT DRAFTSMAN, IS "BEING CALLED UPON TO MAKE BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW"; (3) HIS HAVING BEEN APPOINTED THROUGH THE MASS MEDIA WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION - SINCE I HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF THIS APPOINTMENT ONLY THROUGH THE MEDIA...IT IS ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER THAT I SHOULD CHOOSE THE SAME MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE MY NON-ACCEPTANCE AND THE REASONS FOR IT." THIS WASPISHNESS AND LACK OF GRATITUDE IS NOT LIKELY TO ENDEAR AWOLOWO WITH NEW FMG. AWOLOWO'S PIQUE MAY STEM FROM FACT THAT BY 1979 HE WILL BE 70 YEARS OLD, RATHER ANCIENT FOR THIS YOUNG NATION SEEKING NEW LEADERSHIP.

4. CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE SHOULD PROVE EXCELLENT SPRINGBOARD TO POLITICAL CAREERS IN EVENTUAL CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. IF MEMBERS PLAN CAREFULLY THEY MAY BE ABLE WIN THEMSELVES SEATS IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND PASS FROM THERE INTO NEW CIVILIAN PARLIAMENT OR CIVILIAN EXECUTIVE. IN ADDITION TO YOUNGER MEMBERS LIKE ISHOLA-OSOBU ALREADY MENTIONED, OTHER PROSPECTIVE POLITICANS LIKELY TO BENEFIT FROM APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEE INCLUDE RICHARD AKINJIDE (IBADAN PLBRL, 1975), A LEADING IBADAN LAWYER AND VIGOROUS OPPONENT OF AWOLOWO; ALHAJI MAMMAN DAURA, MANAGING DIRECTOR NEW NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS; AND IBRAHIM TAHIR, SOCIOLOGIST AT AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY (BOTH KADUNA PLBRL, 1975). AKINJIDE PRESENTLY ON WAY TO U.S. FOR WORLD PEACE THROUGH LAW CONFERENCE (REFTEL B).

5. EMBASSY WILL ATTEMPT FULLER DESCRIPTION OF COMPLEXION NEW CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE IN SUBSEQUENT AIRGRAM, AFTER DUST SETTLES A BIT AND REACTION OF MEMBERS TO THEIR SURPRISE ASSIGNMENT BECOMES CLEARER.
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